Chaos

Young Bobby is 5 or 6 years old "helping" his uncle (tio) Diego in sheep camp. The Eastern slopes of the Colorado Rockies sprout velvet green grass in early spring; just what the flocks of Merino sheep need to bolster lambing season. Tio Diego waved off the rambunctious youngster with a mild warning not to go far. They had just finished the midday meal of mutton, beans and tortillas and Diego settled back against his bedroll for a brief nap.

Bobby takes off running with Diego's Border collie in playful pursuit. The sheep dashed away from the boy's path, bleating loudly. The spring weather of the Colorado highlands can be fickle; sweet warm breezes of a sunbaked morning can turn wispy clouds into mushrooming monsters.

The clank of a coffee pot; falling over in the late afternoon turmoil of rising wind; awakens Diego. The morning sunlit skies had turned into angry, rumbling gray black clouds. Diego calls for his young nephew, his voice barely heard over the rising wind. Pelting rain bursts from the angry sky and the temperature drops sharply.

Bobby and the dog are running downhill towards the camp. Frightened sheep race away in all directions. Vicious winds tore at their canvas tent, ripping it up and flinging it towards the panicked sheep. Then the hail began; marble sized, stinging ice. Diego can hear his nephew screaming and the dog barking in the distance. Diego grabs his camp knife and an old sarape and sprints up the hill towards the boy. The hail has grown in size and frequency. Diego; drenched and bruised; reaches the boy, who had collapsed beside a stunned old ewe that fell into a ravine. The dog retreats to a stand of nearby scrub brush. Diego descends upon the boy like a raptor, engulfing him beneath the sarape.

They huddle together against the wet, musty wool of the ewe. The air grows colder as the hail pummels them. Sleet and snow are added to the chaos. The old ewe begins to revive and kick her legs. Diego pulls his camp knife and plunges it deep into her neck, severing the carotid artery. Her flailing panic slows, then subsides. The sheep's blood stains her wool crimson.

Bobby was wet and freezing, whimpering less. In a panic to revive the boy, Diego proceeded to field dress the old ewe. Spilling her warm, steamy entrails to one side he shoved the boy into the vacant cavity. Diego drug two more downed sheep over to join the slaughtered ewe and his half-frozen nephew.

It was enough to survive the night.

This was one of many stories Robert told me – and it would become the most prophetic.

Around the age of 8 or 9 Bobby had experienced the unusual phenomenon of 'blue light', or St. Elmo's fire. The first encounter was near Ludlow, Colorado, again while tending sheep with his tio Diego.

"We were way up in the hills, very close to the (Spanish Peaks) Mountain range. I was playin around with lizards and flowers, bugs and stuff, havin a good time. From nowhere there was the biggest black cloud you ever saw (then) a bolt of lightning…that (had a) clap of thunder (that) was AWESOME! It started to rain like crazy…so we ran underneath a type of juniper or cedar that had the most beautiful deep red…main trunk. Me and tio got under there…and we was just talkin. He was telling me stories of his lifespan as a sheep herder, and rocks and stuff. From nowhere this blue light (appeared) about 10 – 20 feet from (where we were). It didn't come out of the ground, it didn't come from heaven…it was just there."

Diego did not see this light at first, but it drew the curious boy closer. Bobby heard whispers of warning about his future. Captivated by the ethereal glow within his reach, Bobby was startled by shouts from his tio Diego.

"Tio went crazy! He screamed 'Muchacho!' (boy), 'Ah fuego!' and he grabbed me – that I was on fire! He never saw the blue light. He said I was glowing like a blue fire, ***I*** *was glowing…"*

"I never saw that man scared in my entire life; but he was scared that day. We started to herd the sheep in, to get the hell outta there."

Throughout Robert's life this apparition, coupled with prophetic whispers, would show itself. It appeared during the chaos of impending danger, or to test the resolve of important people in his life.